

February 10, 2009

Chairman Dargan, Chairman Stillman, Members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of HB 6357.

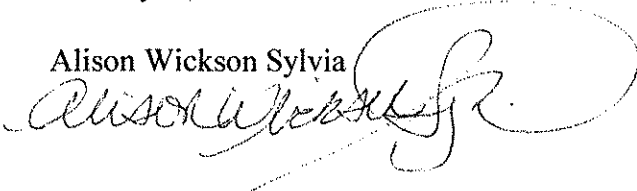
On October 16, 2006 a 13 year old girl went to her bedroom, upset about internet posting against her, took out a belt and hung herself in her closet. Her parents later learned the content of these posts, and then that their neighbor perpetrated the treachery. They approached the local police-to no avail. They contacted the States Attorney's office, no charges were pursued. The FBI investigated and eventually filed charges against the perpetrator, but only because of a violation of a my space agreement in terms of usage. As you may already know, this girl was Megan Meier. The State of Missouri waited until a tragedy such as this occurred, before addressing a serious and alarmingly increasing problem. Let us not do the same.

Three years ago I went to my legislators after exhausting all other attempts to find a way to stop the ongoing onslaught of internet harassment, intimidation and stalking. I sat before you last year with hopes that something could be done. Here I am again. The internet chatter continues, it ebbs and flows like the ocean. But I am drowning in a sea of beaurocracy. The constant dripping of four years is like Chinese water torture, I cannot bear it at times.

I am subjected to this form of retaliation because I tried to do the right thing-I reported a crime. The initial onslaught was an attempt to discredit myself and my witnesses, to influence and eventually attack the State's Attorney's office. I got no protection as a witness and even less now that the case is over. The hypocrisy of this is that my detractors are the first to cry foul if one thing is mentioned about those they support. Cyber bullying has been in the news lately. Well the media got it wrong. One posting you don't like doesn't earn the title. Over four years of incessant postings and veiled threats, with your name, address and personal information twisted and scattered for the whole world to see just might. If you are really threatened you don't go to the media- the fear of retribution is too great. I can't tell what will trigger a jump from cyberspace to my front door, and worst my detractors are faceless entities making it that much harder to protect myself. As you know I have extensively researched this matter. I have consulted attorneys and law enforcement. Based on their recommendations the term internet needs to be defined, but I am assured that even anonymous offenders could be reasonably identified for criminal action. So I ask you again to support this bill, but more I ask that you become champions of this legislation. The lack of a means to address this form of harassment is frustrating at best, tragic at worst.

Thank you,

Alison Wickson Sylvia

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alison Wickson Sylvia', with a large, loopy flourish extending from the end of the name.